

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 1258

E.O. 11652; GDS
TAGS: MASS NG
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR C-130S

REF: A) NIAMEY 1188 B) STATE 44693

1. WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED FORMAL REQUEST FOR C-130S.
GON INTERESTED IN THREE RATHER THAN TWO AND WISHES
TO PURSUE GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT SALE. THUS FAR, HAS
NOT ASKED ABOUT CREDIT FINANCING. FOREIGN MINISTER
DJERMAKOYE WISHES TO TRAVEL TO STATES TO NEGOTIATE
DETAILS SOONEST, POSSIBLY IN CONNECTION WITH HIS
ATTENDANCE AT UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT.
HOPE WE CAN HAVE A FORTHCOMING REPLY BY THEN. MEANWHILE,
REQUEST PRICE AND AVAILABILITY DATA FROM DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE.

2. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF NOTE I HAVE RECEIVED FROM
FOREIGN MINISTER: "FOLLOWING THE CONVERSATIONS WE HAD
ABOUT ACQUIRING C-130S, I HAVE THE HONOR TO INFORM YOU
THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF NIGER HAS OPTED FOR AN OFFICIAL
PURCHASE OF THREE C-130 AIRCRAFT RATHER THAN TWO. THE
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NEGOTIATIONS AND THE SALES CONTRACT SHOULD BE UNDER-
TAKEN AT THE GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT LEVEL. I WOULD
ALSO BE GRATEFUL IF YOU CAN FURNISH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THIS ACQUISITION. AS SOON
AS THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, I PLAN TO TRAVEL TO
THE UNITED STATES IN ORDER TO FINALIZE WITH COMPETENT
AUTHORITIES THE SALES CONTRACT IN QUESTION. IN VIEW

OF THE GOOD RELATIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, THE GOVERNMENT OF NIGER ATTACHES SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO ACCELERATING THE PROCEDURES FOR THIS SALE AND HOPES THE DELIVERY TIME CAN BE AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE. I THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR ANY EFFORTS YOU CAN EXERT TO ACCELERATE THIS PURCHASE."

3. FOLLOWING EMBASSY ASSESSMENT IS PROVIDED IN CONNECTION WITH REQUEST FOR PRICE AND AVAILABILITY DATA, ADDRESSING POINTS RAISED PARA 5.E. STATE 207984.

4. NIGER IS ASKING FOR THESE AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT TROOPS AND SUPPLIES WITHIN NIGER. C-130S WOULD ENHANCE NIGER'S MILITARY TRANSPORT SYSTEM. AT THE PRESENT TIME, THIS SYSTEM IS BADLY RUN DOWN. THE GERMANS HAVE BEEN FURNISHING ESSENTIALLY STOP-GAP AIRLIFT IN THE FORM OF RECONDITIONED NORD-ATLAS AIRCRAFT, BUT THE GON HAS NOW OPTED TO QUALITATIVELY UPGRADE ITS MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT CAPABILITY. SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE NORTH HAVE A LOT TO DO WITH THIS DECISION. THE HIT-AND-RUN DESERT WARFARE WHICH SEEMS TO BE COMING INTO VOGUE ACROSS THE SAHARA HAS UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR A MORE CREDIBLE MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. WE SEE THIS REQUEST, HOWEVER, AS MUCH IN THE LONGER TERM CONTEXT OF UPGRADING THE ARMY'S OVER-ALL MOBILITY AS A RESPONSE TO THE IMMEDIATE

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PROBLEMS ALONG THE CHAD-LIBYA BORDER. THE SALE WOULD STRENGTHEN NIGER'S MILITARY IN CARRYING OUT ITS BASIC ROLE WHICH IS ONE OF SELF-DEFENSE, BORDER PATROL, AND INTERNAL SECURITY.

5. NONE OF NIGER'S NEIGHBORS HAS EVER EXPRESSED THE LEAST CONCERN ABOUT AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS ON THE PART OF NIGER'S ARMED FORCES. MOST WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME ANYTHING THAT NIGER CAN DO IN THE WAY OF FORCE IMPROVEMENT AND TO GUARANTEE ITS FRONTIERS. LIBYA AND ALGERIA, WHICH MIGHT BE LESS ENTHUSIASTIC, ARE ALREADY FAR SUPERIOR IN MILITARY CAPABILITY AND COULD NOT POSSIBLY INTERPRET THE ACQUISITION OF TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT BY NIGER AS A DESTABILIZING MOVE.

6. WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO JUDGE HOW EFFECTIVELY NIGER COULD OPERATE OR MAINTAIN THIS EQUIPMENT, BUT THE PILOTS AND GROUND PERSONNEL PRESENTLY OPERATING THE NORD-ATLAS FLEET WOULD PRESUMABLY, ALONG WITH WHATEVER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE LOCKHEED IS IN THE HABIT OF PROVIDING, ASSURE THE AIRCRAFT WERE UTILIZED AND MAINTAINED IN A REASONABLY EFFECTIVE

WAY.

7. SO FAR, THE GON HAS NOT ASKED FOR FMS FINANCING. IT IS FOCUSING ON A SALE IN AS SHORT A TIME FRAME AS POSSIBLE AND SO FAR, TIME RATHER THAN MONEY SEEMS TO BE OF THE ESSENCE. WE HAVE TOLD THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO EXPECT FINANCING BUT WE COULD NOT RULE OUT A REQUEST FOR IT AS SOME POINT AS NEGOTIATIONS MOVE FORWARD.

8. NIGER HAS A WELL-ESTABLISHED RECORD OF FISCAL PRUDENCE. IT HAS A RELATIVELY SMALL MILITARY BUDGET AND IT HAS ALWAYS AVOIDED PRESTIGE PURCHASES OF MILITARY HARDWARE AND EQUIPMENT. ITS SUBSTANTIAL
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RECENT URANIUM REVENUES HAVE BEEN USED PRIMARILY TO NURTURE A GROWING DEVELOPMENT BUDGET. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, URANIUM REVENUES ARE NOW REACHING VERY SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTIONS AND NIGER IS BEGINNING TO MAKE SOME MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE ACQUISITIONS INCLUDING AIRCRAFT, E.G., THE BOEING PURCHASE AND THE ACQUISITION OF A FOKKER F-27 FOR AIR NIGER. CREDIT FOR AIRCRAFT SALES HAS NOT BEEN A PROBLEM SO FAR AND WE EXPECT THAT IF NIGER IS NOT ABLE TO OBTAIN C-130S, IT WILL BUY THE BEST MILITARY TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT IT CAN FIND ELSEWHERE. NIGER HAS APPARENTLY BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FRANCE TO PRICE OUT TRANSALLS, BUT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND IT CONSIDERS C-130S BOTH BETTER AND CHEAPER.

9. WHILE NIGER'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS NOT UNBLEMISHED, THIS GOVERNMENT IS AS HUMANE AS ANY IN AFRICA AND IS DEVOTING VIRTUALLY ITS ENTIRE ENERGIES TO BASIC PEOPLE-ORIENTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

10. DEPARTMENT SHOULD APPROVE THIS SALE AS GESTURE OF SUPPORT TO A COUNTRY THAT WANTS AND RECIPROCATES OUR FRIENDSHIP, THAT IS USING ITS LIMITED RESOURCES WISELY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT THAT FINDS ITSELF IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE INCREASING REGIONAL INSTABILITY REQUIRES IT TO TAKE NECESSARY MOVES TO UPGRADE ITS MILITARY CAPABILITY. JAMES

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